

Message Text

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60

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 IO-14 NEA-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 EUR-25 EB-11

COME-00 TRSE-00 CU-04 NIC-01 DRC-01 /161 W

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R 160545Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0099

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0727

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AS, SN

SUBJECT: WHITLAM VISIT TO SINGAPORE

REF: SINGAPORE 0612

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER PARKINSON GAVE ME
FOLLOWING RUNDOWN ON WHITLAM VISIT TO SINGAPORE.

1. PARKINSON, WHO HAD HAD SOME PERSONAL MISGIVINGS ABOUT
WHITLAM'S HANDLING OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ABOUT THE
APPROPRIATENESS AND WISDOM OF SOME OF HIS PUBLIC STATE-
MENTS, SAID HE WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY WHITLAM ON
THIS VISIT. WHITLAM HAD CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF, A GOOD
GRASP OF ISSUES AND A CHARISMA VERY MUCH LIKE SIR ROBERT
MENZIES AT HIS PEAK. HE LISTENED TO ADVICE, HAD FIRM
IDEAS BUT WAS NOT INFLEXIBLE, AND IN EVERY RESPECT
"HE'S A MOST IMPRESSIVE MAN." PARKINSON WAS IMPRESSED
BY FACT HE SOUGHT PROFESSIONAL ADVICE FROM BAILEY,
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BLAKERS, WOOLCOTT AND HIMSELF, WITH WILENSKI VERY MUCH IN

BACKGROUND.

2. THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS MET ALONE FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF AND PARKINSON HAS NO IDEA WHAT WAS DISCUSSED IN THAT SESSION. HE SAID WHITLAM REFUSES TO MAKE NOTES OF HIS PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. IN GENERAL, MEETING WITH LEE, ATTENDED BY SEVERAL AIDES ON BOTH SIDES, AND IN STATE DINNER GIVEN BY LEE, PARKINSON SAID TWO PRINCIPALS GOT ALONG EXTREMELY WELL. THERE WAS NO TRACE OF FRICTION, WHICH REPORTEDLY HAD BEEN EVIDENT IN OTTAWA, AND ATMOSPHERE WAS RELAXED AND FRIENDLY. IN TOAST AT STATE BANQUET, LEE HAD MORE OR LESS ADMITTED HE HAD MISJUDGED WHITLAM AT FIRST (REFTEL), WHICH PARKINSON SAID IS FIRST TIME LEE HAS TO HIS KNOWLEDGE EVER ADMITTED MAKING A MISTAKE. PARKINSON SAID THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A FEELING OF WARMTH AND MUTUAL RESPECT BETWEEN THE TWO MEN.

3. AS NOTED REFTEL, WHITLAM HAD BEEN FURIOUS (ACCORDING TO PETER BAILEY) WHEN HE FIRST HEARD OF OUR DECISION TO EXPAND FACILITIES IN DIEGO GARCIA. NIGHT BEFORE WHITLAM

WAS TO APPEAR BEFORE LOCAL PRESS CORPS, WHITLAM PARTY "AGONIZED" UNTIL 2 AM OVER ANSWER TO EXPECTED QUESTION ON SUBJECT. WHITLAM'S ADVISORS PERSUADED HIM TO STAND BY WILLISEE STATEMENT, APPARENTLY WITH TWO OR THREE MINOR AMENDMENTS, WHICH WAS MGCERATE IN TONE COMPARED WITH WHITLAM'S OWN VIEW ON THE SUBJECT. FACT THAT GOS IS STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF US PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN FACTOR IN WHITLAM'S DECISION TO TONE DOWN HIS REMARK ON SUBJECT.

4. I ASKED PARKINSON WHAT SPECIFICALLY WHITLAM HAD MEANT IN HIS PRESS CORPS SPEECH ABOUT CONTINUING COOPERATION IN DEFENSE. WAS SOME NEW PROGRAM ENVISAGED? PARKINSON SAID THE QUESTION OF WITHDRAWAL OF AUSTRALIAN GROUND FORCES WAS NOT MENTIONED IN OFFICIAL MEETING, AND, IN FACT, HAD NEVER BEEN MENTIONED BY GOS SINCE ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL MADE MONTHS AGO. WHITLAM HAD EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN JOINT TRAINING EXERCISES, IN AUSTRALIA OR SINGAPORE, BUT THERE WAS NO RESPONSE ON THIS FROM SINGAPORE
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LQIDE.

5. PARKINSON SAID, SO FAR AS HE KNOWS, WHITLAM'S IDEA OF A NEW REGIONAL ORGANIZATION WAS NOT DISCUSSED, NOR WAS ASEAN.

6. CONSIDERABLE TIME IN OFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS WAS TAKEN UP BY THE PROBLEM OF SINGAPORE STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA. BECAUSE

OF BRAIN DRAIN PROBLEM AND COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING, GOS HAD EARLIER ASKED GOA TO GIVE ASSURANCE THAT ALL SINGAPORE STUDENTS STUDYING IN AUSTRALIA WOULD RETURN TO SINGAPORE UPON COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES. GOA HAD REFUSED TO GIVE SUCH ASSURANCE. DURING DISCUSSIONS WITH WHITLAM, LEE PROPOSED THAT ALL SINGAPORE STUDENTS GOING TO AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING THOSE BEING FINANCED PRIVATELY, BE OFFICIALLY SPONSORED BY GOS. PARKINSON THOUGHT IT LIKELY THAT THESE STUDENTS, AT LEAST THE MALES WHO ARE SUBJECT TO MILITARY SERVICE, WOULD BE REQUIRED TO POST BOND. WHITLAM AGREED THAT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE GOA WOULD ASK STUDENTS TO LEAVE AT THE END OF STUDIES WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH ACTION RESTED TOTALLY WITH GOS. PARKINSON SAID HIS GOVERNMENT COULD NOT BE PUT IN POSITION WHERE IT APPEARED THEY WERE DEPORTING ASIAN STUDENTS AND THE SPONSORSHIP IDEA WAS A CONVENIENT COMPROMISE. PARKINSON POINTED OUT THAT 86 PERCENT OF SINGAPORE STUDENTS WHO HAD STUDIED IN AUSTRALIA HAD RETURNED VOLUNTARILY. CRONK

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